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UPHAM'S ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY,

IN THE

CITY OF NEW YORK.

AN
O R A T I O N

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY,

IN

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,

DECEMBER 22, 1846.

By CHARLES W. UPHAM.

SECOND EDITION.

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At a meeting of the Board of Officers of *The New-England Society in the City of New York*, held at the Astor House December 30th, 1846, it was, on motion of Mr. Fessenden, seconded by Mr. Babcock,

Resolved, that a Committee be appointed by the Chair to wait upon Rev. CHARLES W. UPHAM, to tender him the thanks of the Society for his Oration delivered on the late Anniversary, and to request a copy of the same for publication; and that when said Oration is received, it be published on behalf of the Society, under the direction of said Committee.

Copy from the Minutes.

ALFRED A. WEEKS, *Secretary*.

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ORATION.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE NEW ENGLAND SOCIETY,
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

THE topics that claim our consideration, on this Anniversary, are so obvious, and so inseparable from the occasion and the sentiments awakened by it, and those sentiments are so uniform in all hearts, that no ingenious and elaborate exordium is needed to bring your minds into an appropriate frame. The field over which our meditations are led this day, is not a remote point from our spontaneous and involuntary associations, to be reached only by long-drawn approaches, but opens at once upon the vision.

On the 22d of December, in the year 1620, a company of Englishmen landed on the shore of what has since been the township of Plymouth, in the present State of Massachusetts. This circumstance has long been regarded, with a just and felicitous discrimination, as the opening scene in the drama of civilized humanity in the New World.

Voyagers had often before, we know not from how early a period, visited the coasts of America. Scientific philologists, and philosophical students of manners, customs, and other memorials, have imagined themselves to have traced, more or less clearly, evidence of transmigrations from the older continents to this, in the ages of a remote antiquity. European settlements, many of which quickly disappeared, but, in some instances, giving rise to permanent and populous Provinces and States, were commenced at dates anterior to the landing of the Pilgrims on the day we commemorate.

But the attending and resulting circumstances of that event are so peculiar in their character, so momentous in their bearings, and so wide-spread in their influence, that, by general consent, the opening of the continent of America to the civilization of Christendom, is everywhere getting to be considered as dating from the hour when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth. It may safely be taken for granted, that, whatever particular interest different localities may feel in contemplating the origin of their own communities, whether before or after the 22d of December, 1620, all will acquiesce and conspire in regarding the Rock of Plymouth as the point from which the ever-advancing and ever-expanding wave of Anglo-Saxon liberty and light began to flow over America. Taking this comprehensive view of the subject, presenting the occasion

as the best example and highest instance of the various settlements by Europeans and Christians on the American continent, we may rely upon the sympathy of those of our fellow-citizens of a different colonial origin from ourselves, who may honor us with their presence, in the sentiments and associations to which we yield our own minds and hearts. While, as the descendants of New-England men, with filial and grateful reverence, we pay honor to their memory, it is my purpose, so far as the privilege and ability are given me to determine the spirit of the day, that the contemplation of your ancestral glories shall convey to your hearts lessons which may be profitably pondered by all Americans, in whatever portion of the republic they may have their abode, and from whatever sources they have sprung.

Before taking up the topics suggested by any more limited view of the subject, I wish to concentrate attention upon the event we commemorate in the light I have suggested, as, by way of eminence, marking the era of the contact and intercommunication of the two hemispheres of our globe. Let us pause, at the outset, and open our minds to receive and appreciate the interest and grandeur of the thought.

From the beginning of time, the great oceans had been impassable walls, keeping the opposite sides of our planet in distant and complete

separation. A mysterious, but all-wise, Providence held them apart. For thousands of years, the earth, as it revolved on its axis, had presented to the sun and the stars the vast double continent of America, shrouded in moral and intellectual darkness. Extending from pole almost to pole, it embraced, in its geographical features, all the forms of sublimity and beauty of scenery, and every advantage which can flow from the arrangement of land and water, rivers and lakes, mountains and meadows ; and in the several departments of the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, an unrivalled richness of material and magnificence of display. Its surface, for the most part, remained under the deep shadows of primeval forests, and was traversed by roaming tribes of benighted savages. It is true that, on some parts of the continent, there are vestiges of a peculiar and inexplicable form of barbaric splendor, in vast and shapeless mounds of earth, and structures of masonry and statuary ; but there is no indication whatever of the existence and action, at any time or to any extent, on any part of its entire length and breadth, of an element of moral, social and political progress.

The character of the aboriginal American cannot fail to be a subject of interest in all coming times. It exhibited many of the traits and faculties of human nature in an extraordinary development of dignity and strength. Fortitude and manly endurance,

heroism and patriotism, will ever find their brightest exemplars in warrior chiefs whose spheres of glory were the wild scenes and gloomy recesses of American forests. But the traditions that relate their story can scarcely be made to take their place among the records of real and authenticated events. They pass before the mind like shadowy visions of the imagination. We read them as we do the pages of an epic. The mysterious destiny of extinction, which is taking effect upon the race, pressing it off from the surface of the earth, seems to apply to its history also, which is crowded out from its proper department, exhaled as it were into ideal forms, and transferred to the sphere of fancy and romance. The reason of this is obvious. Their origin and progress are buried in utter oblivion. We behold them, as they appeared but for a moment, as in a dream, and then vanished away. They have told us no story of their earlier fortunes, and they have left no traces of their existence, or influence upon the condition of mankind. In that highest sense of history, in which it is to be regarded as the narrative of the continuous progress of humanity, as the memorial of stages of advancement, one leading on to another, by the law of cause and effect in the moral world, no space is occupied by the American tribes; and it is the same, in the comprehensive view I am now taking of the connection of the career of the human race with the two grand divi-

sions of the earth, as if the foot of man had never trodden the soil of America until the Europeans colonized it.

But while silence and darkness thus brooded over the western hemisphere for more than fifty centuries, the eastern was the theatre of a series of movements and vicissitudes, constituting the substance of ancient history, by which Providence was enunciating to mankind the successive primary lessons of its education, and preparing it to enter upon the career of moral and social advancement designed for it by nature, and which, imperceptible in its early stages, has become a visibly rapid progress in our day, but must be seen in results far higher than have yet been reached, before this earth can reflect in undimmed lustre the glory of Him who created it for the abode of man, and placed him upon it to cultivate and adorn its surface, develop its infinite riches, and bring out, into the highest enjoyment and the brightest light, all the capacities and beauties of its occupants and objects.

Before we bring the Old World to the period of contact with the New, let us pass, in brief and comprehensive enumeration, the grand events, which rise like Alpine summits along the outline of its history, and mark the gradual adaptation of mankind for the new and more quickening influences which sprung into action when America was intro-

duced within the circle of the civilization of Christendom.

The great empires, which had first passed over the field of vision of inspired prophets, followed each other on the stage of historic reality. The successive and slowly advancing preliminary steps, by which a revelation of divine truth sufficient to satisfy the wants, and able to elevate and purify to the highest degree the nature, of the soul of man, was to be ushered in, one by one took place. The lust of empire, calling to its aid the passions of humanity in ages of violence and ignorance, had swept vast armies over the face of nations, and, under an overruling Hand, had stirred, and impelled, and guided the currents of power and thought. At length, through the agency, direct and remote, of these, and all the subsidiary events and influences in their train, the energies of intellect had become sufficiently exercised to give rise to systems of philosophy and processes of mental culture and reflection, and thus to provide a foundation for the reception of a spiritual theology, and the elements of a true and absolute morality, depending upon and embraced within it.

While such influences had been at work over the Gentile world, how wonderful were the arrangements by which a suitable centre of diffusion was provided for the heavenly illumination! At a period far down beyond the most distant glimmer-

ings of profane history, a particular family was selected and led by the Divine Hand to a region, situated at the threshold of the three great continents, on a conspicuous spot, near which all communications of commerce, travel and war, from or to Europe, Asia and Africa, necessarily passed. For wise and obvious purposes, the chosen family was there kept secluded from the rest of the world for centuries. How admirably adapted was the territory to this purpose ! It was a fertile and most salubrious valley, between ranges of mountain-barriers rising through the clouds, in many points, to wintry elevations of temperature, comprising, at different altitudes on its descending slopes, every variety of climate and production, and watered through its entire length by a river, rising among wild mountains at one extremity, expanding at intervals into small inland seas, and at the other extremity not flowing, as rivers elsewhere do, into an open sea — for that would have defeated the design of the temporary seclusion of the nation — but mysteriously vanishing beneath the barren sands of inhospitable and untraversable deserts. While the Divine Wisdom required the sequestration of that people for such a length of time from the rest of the world, and their imprisonment within such limited boundaries, its Benevolence selected for their residence a region containing within its narrow confines every variety of soil

and temperature. The Israelite, as he reclined at sultry noon beneath the grateful shade of the palm and the olive, on the banks of the Jordan, beheld on either side, as in panoramic epitome, from the luxuriance of the warmest valleys, to the far-off mountain pinnacles scathed by the upper lightnings and gleaming in crests of perennial snows, all the gradations of animate and inanimate nature, as they are distributed through the latitudes of the globe from the torrid line to the frozen pole.

Here, while the work of preparation was going on without, amidst the innumerable forms of polytheism in the Gentile world, the great elemental truth of the Unity of God was sacredly preserved until the fulness of the times for its universal dissemination arrived. The purposes for which the Hebrew people had been selected and separated were then accomplished. Temple and ritual, prophecy and priesthood, sacrifice and offering, were all consummated in the life, death, and resurrection of Him who was to be the Light of the World. Judea was now ready to be released from her seclusion, and at this stage of the divinely arranged plan her people were required to go forth, and act upon, and mix with, the rest of the nations. In accordance with that principle, so signally developed in many other conjunctures of human history, the wrath of man was made to subserve the Providence of God. The storm of war burst with

all its devastating and destructive horrors upon the Holy Land. The eagles of Rome were planted upon the ruins of its City and Temple. Not one stone was left upon another of the walls of Jerusalem, and the captive people were scattered by the conqueror among all the nations. They carried their Scriptures, in whose prophetic visions and foreshadowing symbols the seeds of Christianity were wrapped up, with them into every scene of their exile, and every path of their wanderings.

The wisdom of the Divine Being in the selection of Judea to be the centre from which the light of true religion was to irradiate the surrounding world, was proved by the immediate results. During the first age of the Church, in which Christianity attained a diffusion more rapid and extensive than it has in all subsequent centuries, it spread over a similar extent of territory and population, and penetrated to an equal distance, in Europe, Asia, and Africa. In the developments of the ages yet to come, when the routes of travel and intercommunication between the three ancient continents, and between America and the East, shall be laid through Palestine, whose scenes will thus become familiar to all mankind, then will the Providence, which made that the theatre of the religious history of the race, become justified and displayed in all its lustre and glory.

It is unnecessary for me to remind you of the

prominent events and influences brought to bear upon the condition of mankind, subsequent to the Christian revelation — the decline and fall of the Roman dominion, including, before it fell, the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire — the influx and commixture of vast tribes of barbarians — the rise and spread of the Mahometan power, preserving affrighted Christendom from the complete stupor into which superstition, ignorance, and priestcraft, if aided by entire security, would have lulled it — the Crusades, gathering into mighty hosts the population of States, transferring them by thousands and tens of thousands into new scenes, thus awakening in their minds fresh and stirring ideas and on their return bringing back and scattering over benighted and barbarian Europe the elements of oriental refinement and elegance — the amazing impulse given to thought and knowledge by the invention and use of the movable type — the opening of straight paths across the mighty deep by the discovery of the polarity of the magnetized needle, “the faithful pilot,” as the mariner’s compass has been felicitously personified by the most eloquent of American writers,* offering his services without money and without price to every navigator, sitting serene, steadfast, and unwearied at the helm through all storms, and without star, or landmark, or plummet, steering over the widest

* Edward Everett — Orations, p. 255.

oceans with unerring accuracy and absolute assurance — and at last, the Reformation, breaking the lethargy of uniformity, in which Christendom was sleeping the sleep of death, and through the infinite divisions and conflicts of creed and practice to which it gave rise, disclosing and enforcing the great vital principle of true reform and renovation — the rights, the claims, and the power of every individual soul.

The combinations were now completed. Beneath the surface and in the heart of society the ingredients were mingling and working, whose final results will be the enfranchisement and elevation of humanity. But in the Old World, the forms of oppression, superstition and error had become so intertwined and riveted to each other and to the radical elements of our social nature, and had spread such a thick incrustation, as it were, over its entire surface, that the expansive force of internal elements alone could not have thrown them off without an explosion which would have prostrated in desolation and scattered in fragments the whole fabric of society. It was necessary that an influence, coöperating with that within, should be brought to bear from without, and then the process of melioration would at once be safe and sure, the forms and monuments of error and evil would melt gradually away, and the structures of truth, freedom, and righteousness, rise in their places.

At this moment, then, we witness — beyond all comparison — the most sublime occurrence in human history. No one event, with the exception, of course, of those which belong to the sphere of revealed religion, in all the past or future annals of the world, can approach it. We behold the Almighty Hand drawing forth, as from the depths of darkness and vacuity, the American continents, and bringing them into electric contact and communication with surcharged Europe. The ideas struggling into existence there, and struggling in vain against the mountain-weight of ancient abuses, prejudices and ignorance, and the banded power of all interested in the then existing state of things, were welcomed to a free exercise and display on the unoccupied shores of America, and flourishing here into maturity, have passed back again to aid in the regeneration of the Old World. The empire of darkness had, from the beginning, prevailed over this hemisphere. The elements of the world's redemption had been imparted to the opposite hemisphere. In order that they might take full effect, and renovate the entire race of man, an action and re-action were required to be established between these two great divisions of the earth. Europe, which in this view of the subject may be regarded as including the entire eastern hemisphere, and America, came into communication; and from that moment humanity received an impulse

which has visibly and steadily accelerated its progress. The effects produced by the free and fearless experiments in the department of government and human rights, here in process, upon the feudal fixtures and rigid conservatism of the Old World, and in the opposite direction, in the forms of literature, science, fashion, and emigration, although in particular instances and phases dreaded and lamented by some, are, upon the whole, most salutary and reciprocally beneficent. It is not to be imagined that so mighty a power as the moral influence upon each other of continents in inter-communication, will always operate gently and insensibly. The subtle electricity is continually diffusing and equalizing its life-sustaining and life-imparting energies — it ever flows from cloud to earth, and from earth to cloud. From time to time, however, particular combinations occur, of atmosphere, wind, and heat, which give to this ordinarily imperceptible and always salutary process a visible and terrific form — the lightnings flash, and the deep thunder rolls. But the storm is of brief duration, its fury is rapidly expending, the darkness is breaking and disappearing, the landscape is refreshed, the air is growing purer and more exhilarating, and the sky is brightening over our heads.

Turning from the contemplation of the event we commemorate in this broad and philosophical aspect,

let us now endeavour to bring it, in its actual details, before our imagination.

The Mayflower, weather-beaten and tempest-tossed, has reached the shores of America. The Divine superintendence, while it has preserved her, and the precious freight she bears, from being swallowed up in the sea, so overruled the winds and currents, and, as is thought by some, the motives of her commander, that she made the coast at a very different point from that designed by the colonists, and where — although industry, temperance, intelligence, and hardy enterprise have gathered in our day as happy and prosperous a population as can be found in any quarter of the world — the aspect and conformation of the land present as unwelcome and desolate a spectacle as weary mariner ever looks upon. Reefs and shoals are strown along in front of the shore to forbid and repel approach. Above and beyond the beaches, all that can be seen are desert banks and hills of sand. Cheerless and dreary as it now appears, although crowned with light-houses and interspersed with the innumerable sails of a vast coasting trade and foreign commerce, how dismal and disheartening the scene must have been to the Pilgrims, as they approached it amidst the storms and ice of winter ! At length, after many days and nights spent in exploring Cape Cod and Barnstable Bay, in search of a safe and convenient resting-place, they came to

anchor in the harbour of Plymouth. As the boat, containing the first division of the passengers, put off from the side of the vessel, a scene was presented inexhaustibly rich in all of visible and moral interest that can be needed to kindle the imagination, fill the meditative mind, or awaken in the heart tender and admiring affections. The painter and the poet have already drawn inspiration from it, and it will forever attract and sustain the highest powers of their genius.

“ Wild was the day ; the wintry sea
Moaned sadly on New-England’s strand,
When first the thoughtful and the free,
Our fathers, trod the desert land.” *

The waters, darkened by the clouds which, in that season, so prevailingly overhang them,—the rocky, ice-clad coast—the islands and the main, a frozen, shelterless solitude—sky, sea, shore, were all invested with their most forbidding aspect. The shivering exiles slowly approach in their deeply-laden long-boat. They search for a safe and convenient landing-place, and make their way towards a rock with a low and level surface, imbedded in the gravelly beach, and extending from the bank into the surf. As they leaped upon that rock, desolate as was the scene around them, and dark as was their prospect, a burden was lifted, at once,

* William Cullen Bryant.

from their long-oppressed bosoms. As the solid continent was felt beneath their feet, their devout hearts ascended in unutterable gratitude to that Divine mercy which had borne them over the boisterous deep, and guided them in that perilous season through the dangers of a coast which mariners approach even now, at all seasons, with peculiar anxiety, and which had opened to them an asylum where their views of Christian freedom and social progress might be indulged without let or hindrance from man. But great as was their joy, fervent as their gratitude, and lofty and far-reaching as their faith in the Providence of whose great designs they were the instruments, little could they foresee or imagine the lustre of renown which would reflect back through all subsequent ages upon that hour of their experience.

As time discloses the grand and beneficent results to humanity, in all climes and regions, of the colonization of America by enlightened, free, and Christian men — as the practicability of popular sovereignty and social institutions, based upon the principle of unlimited progress and reform, becomes more and more signally displayed in America, and more and more appreciated in the Old World, the halo of glory encircling the Pilgrim Fathers will brighten in the retrospect of grateful generations. Already is a homage rendered, and a triumph awarded them, greater than ever monarch or war-

rior won. On each recurring anniversary their descendants, dwelling in the ancient Commonwealth including within its limits the Rock of Plymouth, assemble in joyful and reverent crowds around it ; and in the remotest quarters of their dispersion throughout the vast republic, sprung from foundations which they laid, pressing on, as they do, among the very foremost at the extreme verge of our ever-expanding empire, the posterity of the Pilgrims look back with filial love and increasing interest to the day and the scene we are commemorating. The 22d of December is becoming honored and consecrated by public observances at the principal centres of population in all parts of the Union ; and it needs no greater insight of the future than all eyes possess, to behold, before many years have passed, the sons of New-England gathering, as you are gathered here, on the return of this day, in cities whose foundations remain to be laid, and in capitals of States whose stars are yet to rise into the crowded galaxy of our flag, beyond the Rocky Mountains, and on the shores of that western ocean, which, as the very charters of the earliest Colonies witness, was the only limit the first founders of our country would recognize or brook to their visions of liberty and happiness for the whole continent.

“ Where the sun, with softer fires,
Looks on the vast Pacific’s sleep,
The children of the Pilgrim sires
This hallowed day, like us, shall keep.”

Perhaps it may be expected by some that I should recount, on this occasion, the fearful sufferings, the wasting privations, the heroic endurance, and the brave deeds of the earliest Pilgrim colonists ; the difficulties they met and surmounted, and the persevering fidelity with which they held on, while so many of the first adventurers to America retreated from the enterprise or sunk beneath its trials and exposures, to the noble purpose of securing to their descendants a permanent home of liberty and religion on this continent. The theme is both fruitful and attractive. Whoever seeks for topics of the noblest dignity or the tenderest interest, will find them in the chronicles that have been fortunately preserved of the first settlers of the shores of Massachusetts Bay.* And, indeed, all along the track of the history of the Colonies, the brightest illustrations of personal bravery, fortitude, and magnanimity, and of political integrity and wisdom, are thickly scattered. But others have treated these subjects more fully than my limits permit, and with such success as leaves no occasion for a repetition. Venturing to assume, therefore, that your own recollections of what you

* Two very valuable and interesting volumes have recently been published, comprising the most important and authoritative documents, under the editorial care of Rev. ALEXANDER YOUNG, D. D., of Boston, and enriched, in the notes, with the stores of his learning. The one is entitled, "Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth ;" the other "Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay."

have heard and read will supply enough to bring your minds and hearts into sympathy with the occasion, I propose to draw from the contemplation of the character and history of the first and the early subsequent generations of New-England, some general considerations, which may serve to enable us and our successors better to fulfil the great purposes to which America was consecrated by the virtue, the faith, and the prayers of the Pilgrim Fathers.

It would be impossible, in a single discourse, to do full justice to the great and noble denomination of men to which the founders of New-England belonged. The PURITANS are acknowledged by their enemies to have breathed the spirit of liberty into the British constitution ; and the freedom and prosperity of America are the record of their glory. So great is the preponderance of their services to mankind over all the faults that can be charged upon them, that those who most affectionately and proudly cherish their memory fear not, but rejoice, to have their merits brought into discussion. Their errors provide the shade needful to give full effect to the light that beams from their virtues. Denying myself, on the present occasion, the gratification of expatiating, in detail, upon the character and career of the Puritans, I would only observe that the monuments of their wisdom, heroism, and greatness

tower far, far above all other objects of political interest, in the perspective of the past, and in the spectacle of the present. Those monuments are the Commonwealth of England, with the civil wars that led to it, and the Colonization of New-England, terminating in the establishment of the Republic of the United States of America. What description, or body of men, since the world began, has accomplished, by mere human means, a work to be compared with this ?

The history of the Commonwealth of England has never yet been adequately written. When justice shall have been done to the illustrious theme, it will be acknowledged that in no movement of mankind has the mind of a people exhibited a grander development, or the cause of human rights and social reform been more faithfully, intelligently and bravely vindicated. In the earnest struggles and lofty aspirations of the champions of liberty and humanity, the profoundest depths of political science were then fathomed and explored ; and if it had been possible in the Old World, at that period, for a government founded upon the principles of freedom, and expressing the will and sovereignty of the people, to have succeeded, the English Commonwealth would have been permanently established, and the great spirits who administered it, in its different stages, have enjoyed, from the first, what will be rendered to them at last — the admiration of the world.

As it respects the monument reared by the Puritans on this side of the ocean, I would only say, that the most condensed and summary review of the free institutions they planted, and which, protected by their courage and constancy, and deriving the principle of inextinguishable vitality from their spirit, are now flourishing, maturely developed, in republican States gathering under the American Union, would occupy a wider space than can be allowed to an anniversary address. History, in its most elaborate and classical form, requires its amplest folds to embrace them ; and in this, the most appropriate office of history, foreign and domestic genius are emulating each other.

Descending from these higher and more comprehensive views, I desire to call your attention to one or two particular points in the example of the Pilgrim Fathers, which may be profitably pondered at the present time.

One of the chief elements of their character, and sources of their strength and success, was their appreciation of the greatness and importance of the sphere which every man occupies, in his individual capacity, as distinguished from his relations to the State, or to society in any of its forms. The energy and influence of each private person, the contribution each individual may make to the general welfare, the might with which a free arm, working the

will of a free spirit, is clothed, without aid from government, and in spite of the frowns of government, in fields of action which government cannot close, — this element of character was developed by the early colonists with more power than by any other community.

The Christian revelation, by bringing all mankind into an equal and immediate relation to the Universal Father, had announced the dignity of each separate soul. But the political institutions and social forms of mankind, in all nations, had been wrought by ambition, love of power, superstition and ignorance, into a system in which individual rights were entirely overlooked or deliberately sacrificed. The State, as such, or, as it really was practically, the ruling power, was everything; the People were nothing. Instead of the king being for the welfare of the country, the country and all who belonged to it were for the welfare of the king. Instead of the priest being for the good of the church, the church was for the good of the priest. The tendency of every institution and mode of social action, political, ecclesiastical and military, was to merge the bulk of mankind into masses, and limit free individual action to monarchs, popes, and generals. The few, who were the heads of the State or Church, exercised arbitrary and unlimited sway; the vast residue of mankind walked the weary round of prescribed and servile labors, whose fruits they

were not permitted freely to enjoy, and to which they were forbidden to aspire. Their wills were enslaved, and their actions controlled by the influence of a despotism, operating either through the arbitrary edicts of irresponsible rulers, or fixed usages, with which long-continued and hopeless subjection had crushed their spirits into an implicit acquiescence. The Reformation had, to some extent, startled the masses to a perception of their rights as individuals; but the fatal schemes to which its leaders lent their ears, pursuing the pestilent phantom of uniformity, which, from the beginning to this hour, has defrauded the soul of man of its birthright and kept the fires of persecution burning, again sealed the prospects of individual freedom of spirit. The great discoveries of that period, and the stirring influences that followed in their train, held out, for a season, encouragement that essential reforms might be effected; but the result of the operation of new ideas in the civil wars of England, and of the struggles for the rights of mankind, as individuals, in other parts of the Old World, even up to the present time, afford conclusive evidence that, if a fairer field had not been opened in America, the cause of the people, as such, could never have made effectual efforts to throw off the burdens fastened upon transatlantic Christendom by ages of feudal bondage.

But from the moment the European colonist

planted his foot on this continent, the energies, the rights, and the dignity of man, as an individual, were secured for ever. The necessities of his situation rendered this result inevitable. The contributions of every hand were needed to perform the labors indispensable to the existence of the company, and of every head to devise and conduct the means of encountering the difficulties with which they were surrounded. The unlimited extent of the territory, and the limited productiveness of the soil, led them to scatter over the face of the country, at some distance from each other in the same community, and to select for their townships the most fertile and otherwise eligible districts, however remote from previous settlements. Every head of a family had obtained by religious illumination and faith, before he left his home in the old country, strong and clear conceptions of the sanctity and value of his own spirit, and of his dignity as the disciple of Him, who, in becoming the only master of the soul, had redeemed it from all subjection to human authority. The reception of the grace of God into his heart, of which his speculative theology and practical piety both gave evidence, imparted to him an inward sense of equality with the highest potentates of earth. He, who looked forward with calm assurance to a heavenly crown of glory and immortality, would have felt no abasement in the presence of kings. After his establish-

ment in the wilds of America, he surveyed the broad acres which were all his own, and his exclusively, unencumbered by feudal or baronial vassalage, subject to no tribute, taxation, or service. As far as his eye could reach into the depths of the forest, to the summits of the hills, along the courses of the streams, and over the bosom of the ocean, there was none to dispute his possession, or interfere with his movements, or in any way restrain or affect the exercises of his will or his faculties. Such a person, thus situated, could not but have constantly exulted in his freedom, and have felt with every pulsation his power and his dignity as a man.

The first settlers of America, by the very act of their emigration, proclaimed their sense of the supreme importance of man as an individual — of his superiority in that aspect to all the properties he possesses as a member of political society, as the subject and citizen of a State. They had long felt government only in its pressure, and had cherished the idea of a removal beyond its reach, whatever amount of suffering that removal in other respects might occasion, as the greatest of blessings. “Open to us” they exclaimed, “a refuge from civil and ecclesiastical oppression, and we will fly to it, no matter how fiercely the wide ocean opens its mouth to swallow us, or with what terrors the wintry wilderness may threaten us.” And when, on arranging their condition in America, they found it necessary

to construct a government for the preservation of order and justice, and for the regular administration of the ordinances and public services of religion, they carefully sought to reserve to themselves as much power as possible, depositing as large a proportion as they could of what it was absolutely necessary to delegate, within a sphere so limited as to be under their own eyes, in the parish and the town, and transacting in primary assemblies, as far as practicable, their own public business.

It is true, that, misled by the spirit still disastrously prevalent, they soon began to employ the enginery of State and Church to work out Utopian schemes of reform — by legislation and discipline encroaching upon private rights, and invading personal freedom at every point where the slightest evil was supposed to lurk. But these attempts to subdue the individual character into conformity with standards set up by authority, were ultimately found to be vain and fruitless. The circumstances of their situation, already sketched, the ideas at the foundation of their religious faith and experience, and the systems of education they established, prevailed over all counteracting influences, and gave a development and force to individual intellect and will — to every original peculiarity and tendency of genius — of which the results are seen in the wonderful progress and present prosperity of the States they founded, and in the enterprise, energy,

ingenuity, and success of their descendants wherever scattered. The power of character, growing out of this free development of the turn of mind of every individual, and the feeling connected with it, that each one may and must choose his own course, open his own path, and determine his own condition, has made New-England impregnable, and covered her comparatively stubborn and sterile soil with abundance. This is the secret magic by which her sons command success and wealth wherever they wander. The States included under that name have contracted limits, and are subject to many disadvantages; on the expanding map, or in the multiplying census of the Union, they may appear feeble and insignificant. But their prosperity is sure, and will be perpetual. No power of party, no sectional prejudice, no error of policy, no injustice of government, can permanently or essentially check the career of progress in wealth and civilization, along which the energies of individual ingenuity, enterprise, intelligence, and industry have from the beginning impelled them.

When this force of individual character, this consciousness of inherent power, is once brought into exercise, and becomes habitual, entering into the frame of the mind, then is man clothed with his true strength. Obstacle, peril and suffering, serve only to reveal in the heart sources of energy, hidden and undreamed-of before. The great master of

the drama and of human nature expounds the principle.

——— “The fire i’ the flint
Shows not, till it be struck.”

One of the most accomplished of the Latin classics declares the effect which trial and difficulty exert in bringing out this mighty force of character, “*Adversa magnos probant.*” All history and observation demonstrate it. The mind, thrown upon its own resources, and summoning them resolutely to the effort, rises with every emergency, and confronts and surmounts all that can be brought against it. Such was the discipline of the early New-England character. Cold, hunger, disease, desolation, grappled with it in vain, at the beginning. Neither the tomahawk nor war-whoop of the Indian, nor all the terrors which hung over their defenceless hamlets, could subdue hearts armed with this inward strength. It grew with constant and healthful vigor through all vicissitudes. The neglect of the mother-country could not cast a shade dark or damp enough to wither it — the most violent storms of its anger could not break it. Charters were torn away by the ruthless hand of arbitrary power, and every resource of despotism was exhausted to curb and crush it. But all was in vain. The people, severally and universally, had realized their rights and their power,

as men ; and a determination to advance their own condition, to retain and enlarge their privileges, thus pervading the entire population, made them superior to all local disadvantages, and triumphant over all opposition. It placed their prosperity beyond the reach of power or fortune. So long as the arm of the settler could wield an axe, or his hand cast a vote ; so long as the district school-house opened its doors to impart the knowledge and the mental culture, enabling him to understand and maintain his rights, or the village church lifted its spire into the heavens to remind him of that immortal element, which, glowing in his breast, placed him on a level with the highest of his fellow-men, it would be impossible to enslave him, or prevent his progress.

It is the great advantage of free institutions, when aided by suitable provisions of education, that they give opportunity for natural diversities to display themselves. No permanent castes hang their dead weights on the community. Each individual, as he enters the scenes of active life, instead of being compelled to walk in the same path with his ancestors, chooses his own occupation, marks out a new course for himself, and by a special combination adapts the voluntary conditions of his existence to his own peculiar tastes and faculties. This impulsive projection of each individual, according to his peculiar nature, into the engagements and struggles

of business and of life in all its forms ; this self-originating and self-stimulating earnestness of pursuit, taking effect upon a whole people, is well worthy of the study of the philosophic mind. We sometimes hear it spoken of with a sneer. The determined assurance, and ingenious contrivances, and indefatigable perseverance by which New-Englanders push their fortunes in the world, in particular instances may justly excite ridicule, contempt, or aversion ; but regarded in a comprehensive and general aspect, as a pervading and distinctive element of national character, such a spirit of enterprise rises into greatness, and becomes truly imposing. It secures perpetual and boundless progress. It diffuses prosperity. It evokes all latent power. It silently, and by a most benignant process, wins for a nation nobler victories and a greater dominion than the mightiest armies could have achieved.

It was not a mere personal boast, but the authentic and genuine utterance of this unconquerable and all-conquering spirit of individual enterprise and energy, when, a short time since, a distinguished merchant, himself a most signal illustration, in his history and fortune, of the power of such a spirit to command wealth and influence, in an argument on the protective policy of the country, speaking in the name of the industry of New-England, said to the national legislators, “ Alter, reduce, destroy the tariff ; pass whatever laws you may, adopt whatever

policy you choose, *we will make money.*” Surely, the history of the action of government upon the labor, business, and capital of New-England, through the entire period of its dependence on the mother-country, and I may say, without involving myself in party passions, up to this very hour, bears one continued triumphant testimony to the superiority of energy and intelligence, pervading a people, to all the powers that government can possibly exert. When their industry, bravery, hardihood, and skill, in all the multiplied forms and channels of foreign commerce, were reaping harvests of wealth on every sea, you closed their ports by embargo and war. They at once transferred the scene of their achievements. Forests vanished before them ; new regions poured forth riches from their fresh and unexhausted bosoms ; and everywhere the sounds of the water-wheel, the trip-hammer, and the steam-engine were heard mingling with the voices of nature and of men. If, after having compelled them to give this direction to their capital and enterprise, reversing the policy of your laws, you attempt to crush the manufacturing and mechanical interests of such a people, their ingenuity and energy, constituting an inexhaustible resource, because one to which all severally contribute spontaneously, perpetually, and to the whole extent of their power, will probably be found able to elude the blow, and make it subserve the very objects it was designed

to injure. But if driven from their mills and workshops, they will again spread the wings of commerce, and, despite of your utmost efforts, place themselves ahead of all competitors on the tide of prosperity.

This principle of individual intelligence, ingenuity, and resolution, pervading the people of New-England, is covering the land with its monuments and trophies. In every form in which skill can combine with labor, in mechanism, in the infinite applications of science and processes of art, in patient researches into nature, and in all departments of mental activity ; in solitary adventure, or in associated companies, religious, moral, political, or financial—directing the resources of multitudes with the accuracy and efficiency of a single intelligence and will—it is working incalculable effects. It turns barrenness into fertility, straightens the winding and crooked paths, smooths down every rugged obstacle, accelerates speed, reduces cost, multiplies business, creates wealth, draws useless rivers from their ancient beds into navigable and secure artificial channels, awakens the hum of inventive, animated, and well-rewarded industry along the banks of every descending stream, opens with its touch the bosom of the earth to give forth its mineral treasures, converts the ice of our northern lakes into a most welcome article of world-wide commerce, and sinking its quarries into the bare

and desolate mountains, manipulates the shapeless granite into forms of architectural grace and beauty, and spreads them in classic colonnades and lofty structures along the streets of distant cities.

Sons of New England ! your ancestors relied upon the power of their own arms, upon their own ingenuity, skill, and personal industry and enterprise. They never looked for the chief blessings of life to the government. They did not expect that freedom, prosperity or happiness were to be secured to their posterity by legislation, or any form of political administration ; but they planted the seed which was to bear the precious fruits, in the awakened, enlightened, and invigorated mental energies of their descendants. For this they provided their system of universal education ; and if you would be worthy of your ancestry, you must do likewise. Look not to legislation, or to official patronage, or to any public resources or aids, to make yourselves or your children prosperous, powerful and happy. But trust to your and their energy of character and enlightened minds, and persevering enterprise and industry. Cherish these traits, and they will work out in the future the same results as in the past. The earth will everywhere blossom beneath you. You will be sure of exerting your rightful influence in every community. You will be placed beyond the reach of injustice and oppression. Rash and weak counsels

may involve the foreign relations of the confederacy ; short-sighted or perverse legislation may do its worst to embarrass your interests ; but if you resolutely apply your own resources of industry, skill, and enterprise to circumstances as they rise, you will be able to turn them to your advantage, and the great essential of democratic sovereignty will be guaranteed to you, the pursuit and the attainment of individual happiness and prosperity.

Another feature in the character of the Pilgrim Fathers, to which I wish particularly to turn your attention, is their trust in an overruling and co-operating Providence. In their records, journals, and other writings, no sentiment has greater prominence than this. It was an abiding and a practical principle. It imparted habitual contentment, gratitude, courage, patience, and assurance of ultimate success. In the greater part of their number, it was not a mere speculative faith, but a personal experience.

While the mind, in the present state of being, is enclosed in these material bodies, with no capacity to attain to communicable knowledge beyond the reach of the perceptions of sense and the deductions to be derived from them, one person will never be able to pronounce absolutely upon the manner or the degree to which the soul of another person is cognizant of God. We know, or, by a

proper use of our faculties of consciousness and self-inspection, can know, how clearly and how high our own souls have risen into the presence and communion of God. The observation of life, if not the happy experience of our own spirits, gives evidence that virtue, in the highest or indeed the only true sense, as founded upon an habitual and spontaneous recognition of duty to God, brings the heart of man into an immediate relation to the Divine Being, imparts to it of the very fulness of the Deity, and lifts it into a heavenly frame. The exaltation of character produced by such virtue is as truly as beautifully described by the poet, whose own genius was translated, by the contemplation of God, into the divinest nature : —

“ Love Virtue ; she alone is free :
 She can teach you how to climb
 Higher than the sphery chime ;
 Or if virtue feeble were,
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.”

This elevation of the habitual promptings of the ordinary actions and familiar duties of daily life into the sphere of piety and faith, into a constant, living, trusting connection with God — the form of virtue which Milton describes — must be allowed, even by those who sympathize the least with them, to have marked, to an eminent degree, the character of the Pilgrim Fathers. If ever men gave presumptive evidence of habitual communion with the

Most High, and reference to him in action and in conversation, they did.

“In those days,” said one of their number, looking back, after the lapse of nearly half a century, to the time when, in his youth, he participated in the privations and perils of the first settlement of the country, “In those days God did cause his people to trust in Him, and to be contented with mean things.” And after alluding to the more comfortable and secure condition of the generation that had risen around him, and mentioning several particulars in which their situation was much “better,” he asked, “have you better hearts than your forefathers had?”*

That which gave the forefathers “better hearts,” was, as he stated it, “Trust in God.” They rejoiced in the shelter of an overruling Providence, and, in the meanness and sufferings of their state, they looked forward with glad exultation and habitual exhilaration of soul, and with as absolute a vision as ever illuminated inspired prophet, to glorious results, one day to be evolved, for the reformation of Christendom and the advancement of mankind, from the work whose small beginnings they had been selected to conduct.

I need not enumerate the occasions in their history, or the features of their usages and institu-

* Captain Roger Clap’s Memoirs, in Young’s Chronicles of Massachusetts, p. 353.

tions, which strikingly display this sentiment. I am not affirming more than all acquainted with the annals of the American Colonies will promptly corroborate, when I state that, without its influence pervading their counsels, and clothing their arms with its invincible strength, not one of the great struggles for liberty, of which the Revolution was the closing act, would have been successful, or attempted.

At several periods the Colonies persevered in asserting their rights and confronting arbitrary power, when they were utterly destitute of all human means of defence or resistance. In such cases they relied upon the interposition of Providence, with the same security with which a general, when the tide of battle fluctuates, reposes on his reserved legions. They did not feel authorized, because they were temporarily overthrown, to compromise with the enemies of their liberty, or by any capitulation surrender the cause. They had an assurance that Providence was on their side, and they felt that it would be treachery to their Almighty ally for them to strike the flag of freedom. This trust in God nailed it to the mast ; and there its folds were often seen floating in the heavens, when the last of its brave defenders had fallen in the fight. The history of the world presents no spectacle more sublime than the heroic and devout confidence, with which, when no longer able to lift a

hand in the cause of liberty and right, they left the issue to their Divine Protector.

Five years after the Charter of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay had been brought over by Winthrop, when the entire population consisted of a few infant villages and scattered hamlets, information was received that their enemies in the mother-country had succeeded in obtaining the appointment of a Commission, at the head of which were the two Archbishops, with authority to regulate the Plantations of New-England, to establish the national church on the ruins of Independent Congregationalism, to rescind the Charter, to overthrow the government, and to impose arbitrary laws. The colonists rose in resistance, few and feeble as they were, with as much promptitude and determination as they did when numbering millions, more than a century and a quarter afterwards, on the imposition of the duty upon stamps and teas. They erected fortifications, raised a beacon-light on the highest eminence in Boston, to give the alarm on the approach of the Commissioners or their agents, and forbidding the circulation of brass farthings, ordained that musket balls should take their place in the currency and exchanges of the people. But well knowing that their utmost strength would be unavailing against the power of the throne, they consulted the ministers, as was their custom in cases of extremity, in reference to

their duty in the last resort, and the answer was — “ We ought to defend our lawful possessions, if we are able ; if not, to avoid and protract.” The idea of a voluntary submission was never tolerated for a moment. Again, a quarter of a century afterwards, the Governor of New York, writing concerning them, said, “ The colony of Boston remains constant to its old maxims of a free State, dependent on none but God.” At length the long-deferred blow was struck. The Charter, under whose benignant shelter the liberties of Massachusetts had been rooted, and had grown up, and which had once been bravely recovered by the people rising in open and successful rebellion, was torn for ever from their tenacious grasp. The deed was accomplished, and there was no hope left. They were urged by all the arguments and persuasions that could be addressed to their helplessness, their despair, and their worldly interests, to acquiesce in the proceedings of the government, and make a virtue of necessity, to obtain, by a voluntary surrender, as favorable terms as possible. And what was the answer of the representatives of the people to these solicitations ? “ The civil liberties of New-England,” say they, “ are part of the inheritance of our fathers ; and shall we give that inheritance away ? Is it objected that we shall be exposed to great sufferings ? BETTER SUFFER THAN SIN. It is better to trust the God of our fathers than to put confidence in princes. If we

suffer because we dare not comply with the will of men against the will of God, we suffer in a good cause, and shall be accounted martyrs in the next generation, and at the great day." Upon full consideration, and after an extended debate, breathing such sentiments as these, the question was put to vote, and the decision stands recorded in these words, "THE DEPUTIES CONSENT NOT."

This spirit, was, if possible, still more boldly displayed by Connecticut, a few years afterwards, when temporarily crushed down by the same arbitrary power. The historian of the United States thus tells the story :

"Andros found the assembly in session, and demanded the surrender of its Charter. The brave Governor Treat pleaded earnestly for the cherished patent, which had been purchased by sacrifices and martyrdoms, and was endeared by halcyon days. The shades of evening descended during the prolonged discussion ; an anxious crowd of farmers had gathered to witness the debate. The Charter lay on the table. Of a sudden, the lights are extinguished ; and, as they are rekindled, the Charter had disappeared. William Wadsworth, of Hartford, stealing noiselessly through the opening crowd, concealed the precious parchment in the hollow of an oak, which was older than the Colony, and is yet standing to confirm the tale." *

* History of the Colonization of the United States, by George Bancroft. Vol. II., p. 432.

This heroic procedure is recognized at once, in its sublimity, when read in its true interpretation, as expressive of unquestioning trust in the favor and interposition of Heaven. The concealment and preservation of the Charter, was, in itself, the declaration of an assurance that, as a few short years disclosed, an overruling Providence would restore its original authority, and renew, with increase, the privileges that flowed from it. When the sacred instrument, on the recurrence of happier times, was taken from its hiding-place, it was, as the historian informs us, “discolored, but not effaced ;” and the liberties it secured to that happy Commonwealth were never again overthrown, but having been consecrated by the noblest sacrifices and services of her sons, in the councils and on the battle-fields of the Union, are now imperishable and impregnable.

As I have before observed, this trust in God constituted, in the founders of New-England, the strength of their hearts ; and if, at the close of the first generation, an aged survivor apprehended that the heart of the people had lost some of the strength it derived from this source, there is still more reason to fear it now.

It is, I think, the great error and fault of our times and country, that but little reliance is placed on the overruling and coöperating agency of God, and but little room allowed for it in the calculations and projects of men. The philanthropists and re-

formers of the age, especially, seem to be unmindful of Providential agency. They, as well as the politicians, speak and act as though the salvation of mankind depended upon the adoption of certain measures of theirs, and the cause of human liberty and progress rested mainly on the success of their schemes and efforts. Indeed, there is a too general if not an almost universal, tendency to look to modifications of government, acts of legislation, and associated movements, as the sole means of promoting the welfare of communities. Men allow themselves to identify the cause of liberty and righteousness with their own favorite notions and projects ; and, having come to the conclusion that they must have their way or all will be lost, pursue their purposes with a fanatical, overbearing, and unscrupulous spirit.

The oppressions and persecutions with which mankind have been afflicted from the beginning have sprung, not from malignity or cruelty, but from the fatal persuasion that the welfare and redemption of the race are inseparably connected with the prevalence of some particular service, or creed, or government. The same cause produces, as far as circumstances allow, the same effect now. The theologian, when he witnesses the decline of any of his own favorite dogmas, feels that the rock, on which the Saviour planted his Church, is crumbling beneath it. The politician, when the elections have

terminated in the overthrow of his party and the access to power of his opponents, sinks into despair of the republic. The philanthropist, when the particular plan he has long been urging upon the public, as the only adequate means of meliorating the condition and removing the wrongs of his fellow-men, is discredited and discarded, is too apt to abandon his hopes of humanity, and lose his faith as well as his temper. The element in which they are all deficient, is an abiding, intelligent, steadfast assurance, that God, as well as they, is at work, reforming and blessing the world. Instead of assuming, as they attempt to do, the entire command of events, if they would but pause, from time to time, and trace the steps of the All-wise and Omnipotent Disposer, and await with serene and cheerful confidence the movements of the Divine Agency, a path of most efficient and benignant action would be opened to them, and their efforts be crowned with sure and permanent success.

The Providence of God over the moral world, on which our fathers rested their chief hope, and the belief of which was to them an inexhaustible fountain of strength, courage and patience, is more signally displayed to us than it was to them. The intermediate experience of the nations, and the increased illuminations of science, have disclosed the laws which control the welfare of associated men, as well as of individuals, with a clearness and cer-

tainty not vouchsafed to former ages. In those constant and steadfast laws, rather than in any extraordinary phenomena, we recognize the Providence of God. In them we behold His hand working the issues of his love.

Such is our speculative faith. Allow me to present an illustration of the manner in which it ought to be practically applied.

Labor, in its multiplex and infinite forms, operating with the instruments and on the condition of matter or of mind, is the great creative principle of private and public wealth, prosperity and refinement. When it acts under the guidance of skill and intelligence — when it obeys the promptings of a free spirit — when the arm of the laborer is invigorated by a personal interest in the results of his labor, it may with truth be said that it conquers all things. It is clothed with strength which never wearies, and to which nothing is impossible. Nature and life become its willing and rejoicing tributaries. The earth blossoms in its brightest beauty, and teems with its most abundant bounties wherever labor is intelligent and free.

But where the laborer is not a freeman, nor enlightened by education, nor personally interested in the products of his toil, a blight and a barrenness, poverty and want, are sure to spread over the land, no matter how great its physical resources, either in the muscular strength and endurance of its people, or in the original fertility of its soil.

This indissoluble connection of the highest profitability with the freedom and intelligence of labor, is a law of God's moral government ; or it is, to speak more accurately, one of the ordinary and established methods in which the Divine Providence visibly controls the progress and condition of humanity.

The entire surface and whole history of the world display the perpetual and irresistible operation of this law. It solves all the problems which the fortunes and fates of nations present. Take the case, for instance, of Ireland. A spot more lovely or more favored by nature is not to be found on the face of the globe ; — its climate healthful and inspiring — its scenery most beautiful and variegated — its soil fertile in every variety of essential produce — its inhabitants brave, hardy, industrious, and capable of continued toil to a degree never surpassed, and partaking, as national and almost universal characteristics, of the very soul of humor, of inexhaustible cheerfulness, of the warmest affections, and of the brightest intellect. But almost from its first appearance on the field of history, it has arrested the anxious and compassionate attention of benevolent hearts to the convulsions and sufferings of its population. At this very moment, the piteous and dying outcries of famine, mingled with the appalling shouts and execrations of mobs of desperate men, come to us with every communi-

cation from the other side of the Atlantic. I need not recount the efforts and struggles which have, to this hour, been made to redeem that island from wretchedness. Eloquence has lavished its richest and sublimest resources of tender persuasion and animating encouragement and terrific denunciation. Patriotism, in all its forms, has offered itself up. The wisdom of legislators and ministers of state has been exercised in vain. Popular excitement in vast assemblages, wide-spread associations, and universal agitation, have been brought to bear. But the evil has not been overcome, or even reduced. The remedy is to be found in the reverent application of that law of Providence to which I am now adverting. As, when the chemist brings two substances into contact, the mysterious energies of occult nature instantly evolve striking results — so let those, in whose hands are the destinies of Ireland, recognizing the Divine Law, by which prosperity is made to spring from enlightened, free, and interested industry, supply the conditions, leaving God to work out the result. Establish the district school, and allow the laborer to acquire a personal and permanent interest in the soil he tills. Do this, and you do all that man need or can do. God will do the rest. He will spread peace and plenty over its surface, and the Green Isle of the Ocean will bloom in beauty, and reflect back from its land-

scape as bright a radiance as has ever glowed from the genius of its orators and poets.

The subject of labor, particularly as exhibited in the servile population of a portion of our own country, is attracting absorbing attention at the present time. I am aware of the prejudices that are prone to arise against any one who ventures to discuss it in an address to a mixed assembly ; but as I am confident that the public good requires that it should be presented to the consideration of the people generally in the light reflected upon it by the law of Providence now under our contemplation, I feel constrained not to shrink from the opportunity and the duty of subjecting it to that light.

For many years we have seen a portion of our immediate fellow-citizens arraying themselves into associations, and resorting to the machinery and expedients of political parties, for the purpose of bringing the legislative action of the country to bear against this species of labor, and compel its abolition by legal enactments and alterations in the letter of the constitution. On the other hand, we see those who imagine themselves interested in its continuance, losing the propriety of their judgment under the irritation into which they have permitted themselves to be kindled, banding together for its preservation, wielding, with a temper such as affrighted despotism elsewhere manifests towards those who threaten its overthrow, the weapons of

legal and illegal violence against all who question its utility or righteousness, rendering the very discussion of it penal and perilous to the life, struggling to spread it over new members of the Confederacy, and actually plunging the Union into bloody and destructive war, to conquer from a neighbouring nation boundless regions of territory for the purpose of extending this form of labor. Keeping my eye fixed upon the operations of Providence, I partake not in the apprehensions of one of these descriptions of persons, and look upon the efforts of the other with an assured conviction of their impotence. On the one side I see men striving with their puny arms and frail passions to accomplish that which God, in his omnipotence, is accomplishing by processes which neither need, nor are aided by, their noisy outcries and convulsive agitations ; and on the other side I behold politicians and rulers contending against the laws of the Most High, and striving, with efforts as vain and absurd as would be human combinations to delay the progress of the seasons, to extend and perpetuate over this fair and glorious continent an institution into whose very vitals He has inserted the ineradicable elements of decay and dissolution.

If any one demands evidence to justify this view of the subject, let him float down rivers that divide regions where, on the one hand, labor is free, and, on the other, paralyzed by bondage ; on one shore

achieving its triumphs, under the stimulus of personal interest, with the strength that resides in a freeman's arm, and with the lights of skill and intelligence ; and on the other, dragging its own weight after it, moving with reluctant steps, and requiring constant superintendence, guidance, and compulsion. On one bank, multiplying millions are rearing, at frequent intervals, queen-like cities, and by spontaneous and gladsome toils and enlightened ingenuity and perseverance, imparting to the yielding and grateful soil renewed supplies of richness and fertility. On the other, waste, and neglect, and exhaustion, are spreading their mildew influence. Such a river, with the contrasted scenes on its opposite landscapes, becomes vocal with the declaration that the very earth itself loves and blesses freedom, and crowns with honor and prosperity the intelligent labor which owns it.

An inspection of the map of the United States displays the unrivalled natural advantages of Virginia. The ocean embraces it in wide bays and noble rivers. The air of heaven flows over it in most balmy and salubrious breezes. Alluvial meadows, swelling uplands, green and lovely intervals, romantic and towering mountains, diversify its surface, which extends beyond the summit ridge of the Atlantic States, and admits it to a participation of the benefits of the valley of the great West, whose rivers fertilize its interior boundary. In extent of

territory, in natural productiveness, in the intellectual energies of its freeholders, and in its ancestral treasures of wisdom and patriotism, the Old Dominion has no superior in this Confederacy. Under the census of 1820, the ratio of representation in Congress was fixed at 40,000, population being computed according to the provisions of the Constitution, and Virginia was entitled to twenty-two members. By the same apportionment, the State of New York was entitled to thirty-four members. Under the census of 1840, the ratio of representation was fixed at 70,680. New York retains the same number as under the census of 1820, namely, thirty-four, while Virginia has gone down to fifteen ! a loss of nearly one-third of her political power in twenty years ! How long will it be before her patriotic and enlightened statesmen will return to their senses on this subject, and following the counsels of Jefferson, bravely meet the question on its merits, and revive the wasting energies of their people and their soil ?

It is now twenty-five years since the American Confederacy was convulsed to its centre, and the government threatened with dissolution, on the admission of the territory of Missouri to the Union. The party in Congress, resolved upon allowing the institution of slavery to exist in that State, finally prevailed. Looking at the progress and condition of Ohio, and the other States which have grown up

under the celebrated Ordinance of 1787, and considering the natural resources and advantages of Missouri, it can scarcely be doubted that if it had been consecrated to free labor, it would, before this, have overflowed in prosperity, and other States have been seen advancing into the circle of the Union beyond its remotest borders. Now what are the facts ? In his recent annual message, the Governor of that State, in all the deliberateness and solemnity of an official announcement, declares, “ With our rich soil and genial climate, we are not a prosperous and thriving people ; ” and plainly, with faithful boldness, accounts for the failure. “ We depend,” says he, “ on physical labor, and reject the superior advantages of mental labor. We depend on brute force, and reject the superior advantages of skill and science.”

With such demonstrations, and they might easily be indefinitely multiplied, will it be possible for our countrymen, in any section of the Union, much longer to keep themselves blind to the law of Providence, thus announcing itself, like the handwriting of God on the walls of Belshazzar’s palace, in letters of light and of fire ?

But, however it may be with others, may the sons of New-England ever behold and confide in it. Your fathers felt an assurance, founded, in them, upon faith alone, that God was with them, and that he would, at last, give a glorious fulfilment to the

hopes they had cherished, of freedom, happiness, and righteousness, for their descendants, for their country, and for mankind. What they beheld in faith, we behold in vision. We see prosperity, wealth, progress, and happiness, such as the world never witnessed, and philosophers have scarce dreamed of before, following in the steps of freedom, intelligence and industry. Let us recognize the law of Providence, and the hand of God ; and let us never allow a doubt or a fear to come over our hearts in reference to the cause of liberty and humanity.

I would earnestly press these considerations upon those of our fellow-citizens who are endeavouring to impart to the whole body of the people the panic to which they have yielded up their own minds, on the subject of slavery. They tell us that its roots are sinking deeper, and its baleful shadow falling broader over the continent. They point to the new States that have brought their contributions to sustain it to the houses of Congress and the electoral colleges of the Union. They are filled with terror at the acquisition, by invasion and conquest, of boundless territories, to be occupied by the institution, and to give an interminable preponderance to the political power of which it is the basis and the bond.

I would urge and implore all such persons, to turn from the contemplation of the miserable

machinations of sectional politicians, who in their folly and blindness are endeavouring to employ the power of our government to accomplish this purpose, and to lift their eyes to that august Providence, which is steadily and surely baffling their plans, and by its immutable laws securing to free and enlightened labor the dominion of the earth. Instead of being terrified and irritated at what men, and parties, and earthly rulers are vainly attempting, and spreading the unbelieving and malign infection among our fellow-citizens, let us, when the Almighty is so visibly stretching forth his own arm, "leave Him," as one of the greatest of the Puritans said "alone to govern the world ;" not interposing our agency unless in methods subsidiary to His. Let us stand back, as it were, in reverent silence, and rejoicing assurance, and witness the movements of our God, as he goes forth in those sublime elemental laws of his moral government by whose resistless energy he is removing the obstructions in the social and political world, which have heretofore checked the prevalence of liberty, justice, and happiness among men. The history of nations, and especially the history and present condition of our own country, display the operation of those laws ; and confiding in their continued operation, let us look forward, with certainty, to their triumphs in the future.

And while we thus trust to the Providence of God

to remove this great evil, let us do our part, in co-operation and subserviency to Him, in rendering more efficient the agency he employs. Let us give our influence and efforts to promote the circulation of knowledge, to encourage freedom of thought, enterprise and industry, and to impart to our fellow-men, and confirm in our own hearts, the truths of religion, and the sentiments of piety, which clothe the spirit with a strength from God. When the feet of the Pilgrims first struck the Rock of Plymouth, these elements of character — sources of the world's regeneration — gushed forth from it. They were the living waters that sustained our fathers in the wilderness, and they will at length fertilize and gladden the whole continent.

Freedom and enterprise are swelling, with a rapidity which no calculation can follow, the millions which overflow the boundaries of the north-western States. They will bring into the bosom of the republic more new States on the slopes of the Stony Mountains, than could be carved out of the whole of Mexico. They will forthwith, strangely confounding the hopes of some, preoccupy the grand and beautiful regions already conquered by our gallant armies. The climate, soil, and all the features of that country will be found incompatible with any other than free labor. Gradually our own territories, and the States even where, as the Governor of Missouri expresses himself, “physical labor”

has been longest depended upon, will throw off the incubus, and welcome the blessings scattered by liberty along her path.

My limits allow me no more extended and elaborate discussion. There is one topic, however, which I must touch before I close.

Our fathers, as has been before intimated, entertained the idea, — sometimes the vision brightened into clearness of delineation, sometimes it was dimmed with shadows, but its outlines never vanished wholly from their minds, — that a vast empire, to be limited only by the great oceans, was to rise from the foundations they laid. In a prophetic dream, which a poet of our own day imagines to have visited one of the Pilgrim Fathers, he justly represents the voice of their posterity as exclaiming — “The continent is ours.” * Besides particular sentiments incidentally expressed, to be found in their writings to this effect, the thought lay deep beneath their institutions and whole public policy. It was expressed in their charters. It supplied a perpetual stimulus to their resolution, and made that resolution absolutely unconquerable, to expel the French from the western wilderness behind them, and is seen to have exalted the patriotic enthusiasm of such men as John Adams and Josiah

* Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Quincy, Jr., in the opening struggles of the Revolutionary controversy, suggesting to their ardent minds the most lofty views of the future fortunes of the country, which they had resolved to bear on their arms, at every peril, into the family of independent nations.

The Constitution of the United States of America, that greatest production of associated human wisdom, the most beneficent plan ever contrived for the government of men in bodies politic, affords, if we will but be true to it, the means by which gradually, — and far better would it be if it were left peaceably to be done, — the whole continent may be included within the protection and shelter of one empire of liberty and order. The organization of State governments, within certain convenient limits, for all local purposes of legislation and administration, and the Union of them into one pervading government for purposes in which there is a general interest, is a plan which, I most assuredly believe, will be found to work more favorably the wider the regions over which it is extended. As the system expands, territorial distance, and the want of prompt inter-communication between remote members of the Confederacy, the only real difficulties that threatened to be insurmountable, are already greatly reduced, and almost absolutely obliterated by recent achievements in science.

The American States have now continued in sub-

stantial union for seventy years. They went into the Revolutionary War, when occupying a narrow strip of the continent along the Atlantic shore ; they now stretch their legislative and executive organization to the Pacific. When their numbers were few, and the limits of the country itself were contracted, a disaffected section might entertain the project of withdrawing from the Union ; but now its insignificance, if separated, is so palpable as to forbid the idea. For half a century, the question was discussed in newspapers, in periodicals, at college exhibitions, and in all private circles, whether extension of territory would not weaken the bonds of Union. It is high time to drop it forever. There is not a State, a county, a city, a town, a village, in the nation, in which, if the popular sentiment were tested, allegiance to the Union would not be found prevalent and ineradicable.

The only source, from which alienation to the Union is to be apprehended, is on the part of those persons who feel themselves implicated in objectionable institutions maintained and cherished in some of the States. A certain description of ignorant and insolent foreigners, not understanding our beautiful Federal system, are doing what they can to inflame this feeling. On this point I wish, before I close, to draw a lesson of warning from an error of our fathers. They were deluded by this

same idea. A Confederation was a favorite object with them from the beginning. It was suggested naturally in the train of associations attached to their vision of a boundless empire of freedom and virtue. But they were prevented from developing it with efficacy by the apprehension that its members would be implicated in the peculiarities of each other. For this reason Rhode Island was excluded ; and until the period of the Revolution the plan of a Confederation was never made agreeable to all the Colonies. If it had been otherwise — if, leaving to each the care of its local concerns, from the beginning, the several Colonies had sustained a confederated council, for the consideration and promotion of the general good, no human intelligence can calculate the effects upon the course of events. Perhaps, essential independence would have been secured without bloodshed, or any of the disastrous economical and moral effects of a long war.

But, however that might have been, we are living in the enjoyment of the benefits of a Confederacy that preserves us from intestine war, and confers upon us untold blessings. Instead of wishing to go out from it because it includes conditions and institutions which we do not fancy, let us rejoice that it opens wide its arms to gather into its peaceful fold, and under its remedial influences, all who seek admission. Instead of feeling scandalized because some States, in the exercise of their reserved sovereignty, enact barbarous laws, and cherish un-

righteous institutions, if we appreciated all the salutary effects flowing from the Union, and kept clearly in our minds the principle on which it was founded, we should only regret that we cannot, at once, extend it over all, even the most ill-governed and benighted races of the earth. Without entering upon an enumeration of the beneficial influences of such a Confederation upon all whom it includes, it answers my present purpose to observe that, in removing standing armies, fortified and garrisoned towns, the iniquities that mark the borders of contiguous and unfriendly nations, and all the curses that follow in the train of rival and warring States, we have multiplied incalculably the chances, and cleared away the chief obstructions to the progress of reform. Indeed the abolition of standing armies is the first step in the elevation of a people, and it must be taken before any real progress can be made. The permanent military organization of a large proportion of the population, separated from the ordinary avocations of life, is the last resort, and the strong defence, of modern despotism. It is the contrivance, by which kings turn the physical power of the people against the people themselves.

The relief from a standing army, which we are enjoying in this country, is itself a blessing greater than was ever vouchsafed to a people before. To appreciate it fully one must travel in other countries. The military forces thought necessary to protect the frontiers of the Union, and preserve

during peace the basis upon which, in the event of a foreign war, the strength of the nation might be organized for belligerent purposes, are at this moment nearly all withdrawn from the country ; but the frame of society throughout this great empire is found able to stand without their aid. In all the Northern States, and, indeed, over nearly the entire surface of the Republic, there are not at the present time more troops, of the regular army, all told, than are permanently stationed in every third-rate city of Europe. If there are persons among us, so outraged by the existence of an institution that holds in bondage a portion of the colored race in some quarters of the Confederacy, as to countenance the idea of a separation of the States, let them consider that while such a result would not in all probability reduce the evil, upon which their thoughts have become so painfully concentrated, it would inevitably and instantly lead to the additional enslavement of thousands and tens of thousands of the white population, in the form of permanent standing armies, bristling along the borders of the multiplying fragments of the Union, and preying upon the resources, the morals and the liberties of all the rest.

My last exhortation to the sons of New-England, then, is to BE FAITHFUL FOR EVER TO THE FEDERAL UNION. While they exercise, according to their several convictions, their political rights in opposing all partial and sectional legislation, resisting the extension, by the national authority, of anti-repub-

lican institutions, and discountenancing unrighteousness and injustice in the mode in which the government is administered, let them rejoice in the assurance that, over whatever extent of territory and from whatever motives of policy the Confederacy is spread, within its boundaries the arts of Peace, which are their arts, and were the arts of their fathers, will have an opportunity, such as has never been secured before, to prevail over all other arts. If, impelled by the enterprise which marks their race, they follow with their traffic and ingenious industry the conquests of our armies, or open the way for cultivation and civilization to advance into the remotest regions of the West, or pursue their avocations in any quarter of the Union, however inconsistent with their views its peculiar institutions may be, if they carry their household gods with them, all others will gradually be converted to their principles, and imbued with their spirit. If the sons of New-England rear the school-house and the church wherever they select their homes, if they preserve the reliance upon their own individual energies, the love of knowledge, the trust in Providence, the spirit of patriotic faith and hope, which made its most barren regions blossom and become fruitful around their fathers, then will the glorious vision of those fathers be realized, and the Continent rejoice, in all its latitudes and from sea to sea, in the blessings of freedom and education, of peace and prosperity, of virtue and religion.



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